

“TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL”**NO. 2997****A SERMON****PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1906****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****IN THE YEAR 1864***“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”**Matthew 4:1*

WHAT a terrible incident! Well may our hearts be moved with fear, and our blood run chill, as we read it. Our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We are taught by our Lord Jesus to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” What we are taught to seek or shun in prayer we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very warily, therefore, should we endeavor to avoid temptation, seeking so to walk in the path of obedience that we may never be guilty of tempting the devil to tempt us.

We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. The lion may cross our path, or come to our houses, and doubtless he will, but we have nothing to do with hunting this lion. He that meets with him, even though he win the day, will find it sharp work and a stern struggle. Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Savior, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished his disciples, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”

But let us do what we will, we shall be tempted. God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, and the Christian man is born to temptation just as certainly and necessarily.

It is our duty to be always on our watch against Satan, because we do not know when he will come. He is like a thief, he giveth no intimation of his approach, like the assassin, he will steal upon his victim. If Satan acted always above-board, if he were a bold and open adversary, we might deal with him, it is because he meets us unawares, and besets us in dark and miry places on the way, that we have need to pray against temptation, and have need to hear the Savior’s admonition, “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

Still, wise believers, those who have had experience of the ways of Satan, will have found that there is a method about his temptations, that there are certain times and seasons when he will most probably attack the child of God. It often happens that a Christian is put on a double guard when he expects that he is in double danger. The danger may then be averted by his preparation to meet it. Prevention is better than cure, it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you, than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you do come off conqueror.

We have observed—you have all done so who know anything of the spiritual life—that the most likely times for Satan to attack a Christian are those he deems unlikely. In carnal security you are most insecure. In such an hour as ye think not, the prince of this world cometh. Just when you would have said—speaking after the manner of men—“I am safe,” than it is that you are in danger.

When Mr. Carnal Security has said, “There is no need for us to be in perpetual alarm, evidently the Prince Emmanuel smiles upon us, and the Holy Spirit dwelleth within us, we are the children of God, let us sit at the table and feast, let us eat, drink, and be merry,”—it is at that very time that you might hear a sound as of One who saith, “Arise, let us go hence, for this heart has become polluted, I will no longer shed abroad the conscious delights of my presence in it.” Beware, dear friends, of the devil, beware of him most when you think you have least need to beware of him.

For a key-note to our meditation tonight, I propose to take the word “Then,” as it stands in the forefront of our text. I think there will be found something of instruction here, especially to young believers, as to the times when Satan will most probably beset them, and they will, probably, be surprised to find that the very times when Satan will be likely to attack them, according to the judgment of experience and the examples of God’s Word, are the times when they would have thought him least likely to do so. I want you to observe the time of our Savior’s temptation—first, with regard to *the circumstances which preceded it*, and then *the circumstances which followed it*. When we have noticed those two things, we will take the whole case, and see if we do not derive some instruction from it.

I. First, OBSERVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PRECEDED THE TEMPTATION OF OUR SAVIOR IN THE WILDERNESS.

Jesus had been in a specially devout frame of mind before He was led into the wilderness. It is recorded by Luke that our Savior, when He was baptized, was praying. He was ever a man of prayer. This is indeed a characteristic of the Savior, and if we should be asked, what there was in Christ which distinguished Him from other men, besides His outward holiness and His inward consecration, we should say, “The habitual exercise of a spirit of prayer.”

It is recorded that Jesus, as He was baptized, was praying, and yet, after this prayer was offered, after Jesus had thus worshipped at His Father’s throne, the temptation came. So, you may have been in your closet, and had a season of especial refreshing, the Lord may have manifested Himself unto you, as he does not unto the world, in your private devotions, but do not therefore conclude that you are rid of Satan’s temptations. You shall no sooner, it may be, have passed out of the closet than you shall be challenged to the conflict. The communion shall cease, and the combat shall begin.

Satan knows that you have been doing mischief to his cause in your prayers. Have you not been bringing blessings down from on high? Have you not been shaking the walls of the spiritual Jericho, and does he not therefore hate you? Satan has the same hatred of you that we find in evil men, and we know that all bad men are always more angry when good men are more busy. So Satan becomes the more Satanic when he knows that you have been unlocking the treasury of God to make those rich whom he would have poor.

Why, your prayers, if I may use so daring a speech, have been instrumental in opening blind eyes, quickening dead hearts, unlocking the doors of spiritual prison houses, and shaking the gates of hell, and do you not think that Satan will attack you now? Expect that Satan is at the closet doors, and if, when you are lax in devotion, you are not tempted, rest assured that, whenever you are much in prayer, you may expect Satan to be exceedingly enraged against you.

Do you not see, dear friends, that it is not to his advantage to let you continue in the act of prayer? He knows that, when you grow more like your Master, you get more of the Holy Spirit in you, and therefore, it is to his interest to spoil this spirit of prayer, so he meets you, as it were, with his great club in his hand to knock you down. “Pray! will you?” saith he. “No, that you shall not, for I will tempt you. Pray! will you?—grow strong, and laugh me to scorn? No, that you shall not,” saith he, and he leaves no stone unturned to try if he can lead you away from the heavenly, soul-enriching employment of private prayer.

Now, if such a thing should happen to you, do not be surprised, as though some strange thing had occurred. It was so with your Lord. He prayed, and temptation came, and when you have been in prayer, you may expect to be tempted of the devil.

So, too, *our Savior had been engaged in an act of public obedience to His Father’s will.* You will not forget that He had been baptized. He went to the Jordan’s brim, and gave Himself into the hands of the Baptist, that He might lie immersed beneath the Jordan’s waves. “Thus it becometh us,” saith He, “to fulfill all righteousness.”

Some persons after baptism are favored with great joy, as the eunuch, to wit, “he went on his way rejoicing,” but this is no rule. It will often happen that, after the public avowal, after our public confession of faith, there will come a time of unusual struggling and conflict. You are not to say, dear

friend, “I know I have done right because I feel so happy,” you have done right, if you have fulfilled God’s command, whether you feel happy or no. The witness of the Spirit to an ordinance is not your happiness after the ordinance, for it may so happen that, instead of happiness following immediately after your obedience, you may have to enter into a terrible conflict with the prince of darkness.

Little children must have little rewards for every service that they do while they are little children, but those sons and daughters of the family who have had their senses exercised do not expect to have sweetmeats given to them every time they are obedient. Nay, they can be obedient, and take medicine from a father’s hand, and consider even the bitter draught to be as real a proof of acceptance as though it had been some sweet thing, such as they had in their younger days.

We are not to be always children—not always little babes. It was because the eunuch was but a babe in grace that he went on his way rejoicing, but stronger believers will often be tried as Christ was. They will come up dripping from baptism to go down dripping into the floods of another river of deep temptations and sorrow. You must not always expect even the Lord’s supper to yield to you excessive comfort, or if it does yield you comfort, you may expect that Satan will meet you very soon after. The more soul-enriching ordinances become to you, the more probability there is that you will be tempted after them.

If there is a pirate out at sea, what ship does he attack? An empty one? Nay, nay, but that which has been to the mines, and is coming home with a rich freight. Then saith the pirate, “Up with the black flag, now is our time for prize money.” And when you have been to baptism, or the Lord’s supper, or to prayer, and your soul has grown rich through fellowship with the Lord Jesus, “Now,” saith Satan, “it is my time. I will attack the heavenly-laden ship and see what spoil I can get.”

Not only had our Savior been devout and obedient, but *He had also been in an exceedingly humble frame of mind*. He was baptized by John. John said, “I have need to be baptized of thee,” but the Master puts it, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” Talking of what is becoming! The Son of God speaking, not only of what is right, but of what is becoming and expedient! This shows how holy was His mind as to humbleness before God, and yet He was tempted.

When we are proud, we may expect to be tempted, or rather, we are tempted already, for the devil has at least one of the meshes of his net over us, but when we are humble, when God has been pleased to make us lie low at the foot of His throne, we perhaps think that now no temptation can come. Let us not be quite so sure. Where did Christians meet with Apollyon? Do you remember? It was in the Valley of Humiliation. Not on the mountain top, but in the valley, where the shepherd boy said he who was down needs fear no fall.

The boy was right in one sense, but there are some of us who, in another sense, need to be watchful and afraid even there. Satan does so hate humility that he will spite all his venom on it, he does so thoroughly abhor that sweet flower, the perfume whereof God does delight in, the prayer of a humble and contrite heart, that he will pour all his malice upon it.

If you have had a broken heart, Satan and you will never be friends, for you do fulfill the promise, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.” God has put an enmity, which never was in your heart before, between you and Satan. Your brokenness of heart is an evidence that God put that enmity there, of grace alone comes such experience. Your antagonist, seeing that enmity against him in the fact of your humiliation and contrition before God, will do his utmost to tempt you, if he can, to commit sin.

We find that *our blessed Lord was on this occasion favored with a divine seal and token of His Sonship*. From the opened heavens, the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him, and a voice came from the excellent glory, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Will He now be tried by the arch-fiend? Did the devil hear that? He has much too quick ears not to have heard it. He therefore must have known that Christ was God’s well-beloved Son, and has he the impudence to attack Him? Yes, so great a fool is the devil, that he will thrust his hand into the fire, and burn it, he will attack a child of God, though he must know that he cannot overcome him. So stultified is he by sin, that he will

rush upon the thick bosses of God’s buckler, and stand in conflict with the Spirit, who is infinitely stronger and greater than he.

Now, beloved, you, perhaps, have had some very sweet witness with your spirit that you are born of God. “Abba, Father,” has been upon your tongue all day. When you knelt down to pray, the sweet beginning of the Lord’s prayer was the beginning and end of it all, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” and you took your mercies as coming from a Father’s hand, and your sufferings and chastisements as from the same paternal love too. I hope you are not sitting down, and saying, “Now, my battle is over, my victory is won for ever,”

Beloved, if you do, you reckon without your adversary. You are thinking you are in port, while as yet you are only midway on the ocean. You are thinking about sweet fields before you have fairly crossed the swelling flood. Come you and be wise, lest that arch-deceiver take you unawares. If you had hope of your adoption, be still on the watch-tower, lest Satan come against you. The surer I am that I am a child of God, and the clearer that is made to appear to other people, the more the devil will make me a target for his arrows.

I am borrowing many a good figure just now from one dear friend who has written upon this subject fully and largely. He says, quoting an old divine, “A man never goes forth to shoot his own fowls. When he goes forth with his gun, it is against wild birds. And so the devil never goes out to tempt his own children, that is not necessary, for they are his already, but when he knows that a man is a child of God, and is, as it were, a wild bird to him, then he goes out against him.” The more surely, then, you are known to be a child of God, the more certainly will Satan be against you.

Again, to return to the narrative, we are told by Luke that *Jesus Christ was full of the Holy Ghost*. He was full of the Holy Ghost, yet He was tempted. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is never given in vain, and if given to us, it is as a preparation for conflict, in order that we may have strength proportioned to our need. And again, where the Holy Spirit is given, the evil spirit will soon labor, for the very reason I have referred to before because, where God’s treasure is, there the thief will try to break in.

I think it was one of my predecessors who said that nobody ever broke into a Baptist minister’s house, because it was well known there would be nothing for them to get, but thieves often broke into other people’s houses because they knew there was treasure there. So the devil does not go after people who are without grace. “Why,” saith he, “there is nothing there for me to steal,” but if you are full of grace, then you may expect the arch-adversary to come and attack you.

When old Farmer Jones went home on Friday evening, nobody went to watch for him on the road, but it was on a market night, when he had been selling wheat, and some fellow had marked him on the Exchange taking money, it was then that the foot-pad stopped him, and robbed him of his gold. The devil knows when you are getting rich, and full of the Holy Ghost. Now he thinks there is something worth his time and trouble, and so he speeds with dragon wings to the place where this rich child of God is, and he waylays him, that he may attack him, and cast him down.

Well, there is never a better time to fight the devil than when you are filled with the Spirit. So the devil is a fool for meddling with you then. There never was such a fool as the devil is, and though he hears us say that now, he knows it, he is a fool, and will be to the end of the chapter, till my Master puts the bit into his mouth and the bridle to his jaws, and hurls him down to the regions where he shall dwell forever.

Thus much, then, for the circumstances preceding our Lord’s temptation. I think we may ring the alarm, and this may be a note of warning to you, even though you may have been in deep devotion, and may have performed acts of obedience in the most humble and acceptable manner, and received tokens of adoption, and are now full of the Holy Ghost.

II. Now, to change the strain, THE SUCCEEDING CIRCUMSTANCES ARE WORTHY OF YOUR SERIOUS REFLECTION.

Jesus Christ was just beginning his public ministrations. As one saith, “So long as Jesus Christ had nothing to meddle with but the chips in his father’s carpenter’s shop, the devil never tempted Him, but

now that He was beginning to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, the devil attacked Him.” While we have nothing to do in the cause of God, and are secret and retiring, it may be we shall escape, but no common temptation will happen to the man who is engaged in unusual labor. Satan will find some extraordinary means of tempting him whom God puts upon extraordinary service.

Satan is very much afraid of all beginnings except one. He loves the beginning of sin, for it is like the letting out of water, but he cannot bear the beginning of a new life in the Christian, “Behold he prayeth!” “Ah,” saith the devil, “I hate that first prayer.” The beginning of repentance Satan loves not. There is the letting out of water indeed! The beginning of a holy project, the beginning of a Christian ministry, the beginning of some ardent missionary, the opening up of some new field of Christian labor, the devil hates. If he can nip these things in the bud, he knows they cannot come to perfection. So Jesus is beginning to preach the Gospel, and Satan therefore attacks him. To what may we trace the attacks of Satan just at the beginnings?

A primary cause is *Satan’s malice*. No sooner is Christ acknowledged openly to be anointed of the Holy Ghost to preach glad tidings, than the devil says, “I will shoot my arrow at Him. This is the heir, come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” So, in the beginning of the Christian life, and especially at the outset of the Christian minister, Satan says, “Here is another God-ordained man, here is another raised up against me,” and there is another arrow directed at the child of God. It is the devil’s complimentary arrow on the earnest soul when first God launches it in life.

Another cause is *Satan’s craftiness*. He can foresee where we cannot. When there is a good project in hand, many an unbeliever says, “Oh, nothing will come of it, it is a Utopian design, fanaticism projected it, and enthusiasm will carry it out for a little, but it will be all a bottle of smoke.” Do you hear the devil? He is saying to himself, “I know the beginnings are good. I have crushed too many of them not to know the look of the Lord.” “Ah!” says he, “if I leave this man alone, all Jerusalem and Judaea will go after him. I must crush him at once.”

There is a hellish industry about Satan. He knows that his kingdom stands upon a rickety foundation, and therefore he is always anxious. Like a man at sea in a leaky ship, who is afraid of every wind that blows, so is the devil afraid of every new good thing, and every fresh device of divine grace, and when he sees the beginnings, he thinks, “I will destroy the beginnings, I will break down the foundations, and then the walls can never be built.”

We may, then, attribute temptation, at the beginning of the Christian life or Christian effort, to Satanic craft as well as to Satanic malice.

A further reason why you are thus tempted and tried is that *God, in His wise providence, is now testing you to see whether you are a fit man for His work*. Before a firearm is sold, it is taken to the proof-shop, and there it is loaded with a charge much heavier than it will ever have to carry in the ordinary sportsman’s hand. The barrels are fired, and if they burst in the proof-house, no great hurt is done, whereas it would be exceedingly dangerous if they should burst in the hand of some unskillful man. So God takes his servants. Some, of whom He will make special use, He perhaps loads with five times more temptation than He means they should ordinarily have to endure, in order that He may see, and prove to onlookers, that they are fit men for His divine service.

We have heard that the old warriors, before they would use their swords, would bend them across their knees. They must see whether they were made of the right stuff or no before they would venture into battle with them, and God acts thus with His servants. Martin Luther would never have been the Martin Luther he was if it had not been for the devil. The devil was, as it were, the proof-house for Martin Luther. He must be tried and tempted by Satan, and so he became fit for the Master’s use.

Our Savior Himself became perfect through His sufferings. Through His temptations, He became able to succor those that are tempted, for He was tempted in all points like as they are, And you, Christian, will never be of great service in God’s church without temptation, you shall neither be able to strengthen the weak, nor to comfort the faint-hearted. You cannot teach the ignorant, or inspire with courage the wavering, unless you have yourself been taught in the school of experience.

John Bunyan, who teaches all the ages, and will teach us till we meet in the Celestial City, must himself be taught, in five long years of dark despair, the ruin of the creature and the glory of free grace. I believe you will find it to be the case in regard to most of the preachers whom God has signally honored—in fact, I think, in regard to all preachers who have been of great use in the church—that there has been a preparatory struggle in the wilderness, a preparatory forty days’ fasting, before they have come forth to labor for the Lord.

“Well!” says one of my hearers, “I think I have found something out tonight. When I came into this Tabernacle, this was my state of mind. I have been lately undertaking some new project, and ever since I have thought of it, and commenced it, I have had such a gloom of heart as I have never known before.” My dear friend, I think I have told you the reason of this. Take it as a favorable omen. Satan knows that your project will do a serious injury to his kingdom, and this is why he is endeavoring, with his entire strength, to divert you from it. I am sure you and I would do the same if we were engaged in the same struggle as Satan is, and as he has a vast deal more sense than we have, he will not be likely to leave that stone unturned. Go on, brother, go on.

If you tread on a dog, he will bark, and you may depend upon it that you have trodden upon him when he does bark, and so you may know you have done mischief to Satan when he begins to roar at you. Go on, make him roar more. Never mind his roaring, make him roar again. Ay, stir him up if you are in God’s service, and count it a triumph when you hear a growl. It is a good sign that angels are singing when devils are howling. It is a good omen that you are progressing when Satan is so endeavoring to cast you down.

III. Taking the case of the Savior being tempted, as a whole, I may offer a few closing reflections.

First, *a holy character does not avert temptation.* Perfect, spotless, without any propensity to sin, yet is Jesus tempted. In Him the prince of this world found nothing congenial to his temptations. When Satan tempts us, he strikes sparks on tinder, but in Christ’s case, when the devil tempted Him, it was like striking sparks on water, yet he kept on striking. Now, if the devil goes on striking where there is no better result than that, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of! Expect it, then, though you become never so sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and destroy sin after sin and lust after lust, you will have this great dog of hell barking at you still.

The greatest distance from the world will not ensure you from temptation. When we mix with the world, we know that we shall be tempted. In our business, in the banking-house, in the farm, on the vessel, in the street, we expect that, in the world, we shall have temptation, but if you could get out of the world, you would still be tempted. Jesus Christ went right away from human society into the wilderness, and “then” was He tempted of the devil.

Solitude is no preservative against temptation from Satan. Solitude has its charms and its benefits, and may be useful in curbing the flesh, and certainly in checking the lust of the eye and the pride of life, but the devil should be worsted by other weapons than that of solitude. Still he will attack you even there. Do not suppose, then, that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritually-minded persons may have to endure the same, and with the boldest character and the holiest position there may yet be the darkest temptation.

The utmost consecration of spirit will not enshrine you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. His baptism was real. He was truly dead to the world. He lived only to do His Father’s work. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, yet He was tempted. Your hearts may glow with a seraphic or cherubic flame of love to Jesus, and yet the devil will try to throw cold water upon it, and to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness.

Nor will the highest form of grace, the greatest development of a spiritual mind, prevent our being tempted, nay, the most eminent public service and the most favored private communion will not keep us from being assailed. Saith one, “At what time may the Christian take off his armor?” If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Inasmuch as we are to do as the old knights did in war time, to sleep with the helmet and breastplate

buckled on, you may rest assured there is good need for it. At the very time we think not, the arch-deceiver will be on the watch to make us his prey. The Lord keep us watchful in all seasons, and give us a final escape out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear!

Alas! there are some here who are not thus tempted, and who are, perhaps, congratulating themselves, and saying, “We were never tempted like that.” Ah! you are never emptied from vessel to vessel, you are settled on the lees, and why are you left so quiet? Is it not because there is no spiritual life in you? You are dead in trespasses and sins. You are the devil’s own, therefore why should he hunt you? A man doth not go forth with a lasso to catch a horse that stands in his stable ready bridled and saddled for him to ride whenever he likes, but he goes forth to hunt the wild horse that is free.

So the devil knows that he has you bridled and saddled, and that he can ride you whenever he pleases, and he does not need to hunt you, but he will hurt the free Christian, upon whose back he cannot place a saddle, and into whose mouth he cannot fix a bit.

I wish you were tempted. I wish there was something in you worth the devil’s efforts, but there is not. May God renew your hearts and give you a right spirit! Remember that the way of salvation is to trust Jesus. Do that, and you are saved. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. If you are believing in Jesus—trusting in Jesus only, entirely, with your whole heart, then you are saved, then you may defy the power of hell, and come off more than conqueror. May the Master bless these words, to the warning of many and the comfort of some, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 4:1-11

Verse 1. *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*

He had just been baptized, the Spirit of God had descended upon Him, and the Father had borne witness to Him, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” yet immediately after all that, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. So, after your times of sweetest fellowship with God, after the happiest enjoyment of Gospel ordinances, after the sealing of the Spirit within your hearts, you must expect to be tempted of the devil. You must not suppose that, in your Christian life, all will be sweetness—that all will be spiritual witness-bearing.

You have to fight the good fight of faith, and your great adversary will not be slow to begin the encounter. You are a pilgrim in a strange land, so you must expect to find rough places on the road to heaven. Yet, since you are so much weaker than your Master was, you will do well to pray the prayer that He taught to His disciples, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

2-3. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him,—*

See how Satan seizes opportunities. When he finds us weak, as the Savior was through long fasting—when he finds us in trying circumstances, as the Savior was when hungry in the desert—then it is that he comes to tempt us. This dastardly foe of ours takes every possible advantage of us, that he may, by any means, overthrow us.

3. *He said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

He begins with an “if.” He tries to cast a doubt upon the Savior’s Sonship, and this is the way that he often attacks a child of God now. He says to him, “If thou be a son of God, do so-and-so.” He challenged Christ to work a miracle for Himself—to use His divine power on His own behalf, but this the Savior never did. He challenged Christ to distrust the providence of God, and to be His own Provider, and this is still a very common temptation to God’s people.

4. *But he answered and said, It is written,—*

That is the only sword that Christ used against Satan—“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” There is nothing like it, and the old dragon himself knows what sharp edges this sword has. Christ said, “It is written,”—

4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

God can sustain human life without the use of bread, although it is the staff of life, for bread does not sustain life unless God puts power into it to do so, and He can, if it pleases Him, use that power without the outward means. Our Lord thus showed that God could provide for Him in a desert without His interference with the plans of divine providence by selfishly catering for Himself. So the first victory was won.

5-6 *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,—*

Here he plays with the Word of God, for the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so, “It is written,”—

6. *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou hast thy foot against a stone.*

The devil did not quote correctly from Psalm 91:11-12, he left out the most important words, “He shall give his angels charge over thee, *to keep thee in all thy ways,*” but it was not Christ’s way to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus therefore answered Satan’s misquotation with a true quotation.

7. *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

I know some people, who earn their living in employments which are very hazardous to their immortal souls. They are in the midst of evil, yet they tell me that God can keep them in safety there. I know that He can, but I also know that we have no right to go, voluntarily, where we are surrounded by temptation. If your calling is a wrong one, and you are continually tempted in it, you may not presume upon the goodness of God to keep you, for it is your business to get as far as you can from that which will lead you into sin.

God does not put his servants on the pinnacle of the temple, it is the devil who puts them there, and if they ever are there, the best thing they can do is to get down as quickly and as safely as they can, but they must not cast themselves down, they must look to Him who alone can bring them down safely. With some professors, presumption is a very common sin. They will go into worldly amusements and all sorts of frivolities, and say, “Oh, we can be Christians, and yet go there!” Can you? It may be that you can be hypocrites, and go there, that is far easier than going there as Christians.

8-10. *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Christ will not endure any more of this talk. When it comes to a bribe, the promise that the devil will give him earth’s glory if he will but fall down and worship him, Christ ends the whole matter once for all. Thrice assaulted, thrice victorious, blessed Master, enable us also to be more than conquerors through thy grace!

11. *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

Regarding it as their highest honor to be the servants of their Lord.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—266, 262, 55

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.